Interreg Co-funded by the European Union

IPA ADRION

GREENSMES

Open call for piloting green transnational entrepreneurial cooperation

BACKGROUND, PURPOSE OF ACTIVITY

This call is launched in the framework of the project GREENSMES: Enhancing SMEs' modernization and green innovation and transition towards successful sustainability by transnational collaborative practices and tools, co-funded by the IPA ADRION programme. GREENSMES addresses the shared territorial challenge of strengthening green innovation and sustainability in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) across the IPA ADRION area.

The project aims to strengthen innovation capacities through transnational cooperation and quadruple helix (QH) collaboration, bringing together public authorities, academia, businesses, and civil society. It promotes cross-regional cooperation in green transition, clean technologies, SME support and up-skilling, innovation ecosystem development, and rural development. SMEs, including micro-enterprises, form the backbone of economies in the IPA ADRION region, yet current production and consumption patterns continue to create environmental and health challenges. Supporting SMEs in their transition toward more sustainable and resource-efficient models is therefore essential. Although the importance of green innovation is growing, efforts to promote the green economy in the programme area remain fragmented and limited, and many SMEs are still not fully aware of existing policies, incentives, and opportunities. GREENSMES addresses this gap by supporting SME modernisation and green transition, encouraging greener production processes, sustainable products and services, and improved efficiency and competitiveness.

The initiative is implemented by project partners from Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro. Within this framework, this open call targets **micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in North Macedonia**, inviting them to engage in activities that support green innovation and the transition toward more sustainable business practices.

OVERALL DIMENSION END EXPECTED RESULTS

The total number of supported soft-measures projects will be **at least 5**.

The financial value of support provided for the implementation of each awarded soft-measures project will not exceed **€2,000** per recipient (including VAT).

As a consequence, financial value of support may be lower than the amount requested. Also, financial value of support - and support itself - may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the grant agreement during implementation *(e.g., improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc)*.

Support will be provided by senior experts selected and appointed by the contracting organisation.

ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS

The Applicant/beneficiary is a business entity that:

- is a Micro, Small or Medium sized Enterprise (MSMEs) according to the definition and classification reported in the COMMISSION DELEGATED DIRECTIVE (EU) 2023/2775 of 17 October 2023 entered into force on January 1st, 2024;
- has its main economic activity in one of the sectors targeted by the GREENSMES project:
    1. **Energy and sustainable environment**;
    2. **ICT** - information and communication technologies;
    3. **Agro-food manufacturing** (except primary production of agricultural products, fishery and aquaculture products; on-farm activities for preparing a product for the first sale);
    4. **Home system manufacturing**;
    5. **Advanced mechanics, electronics, automation and aerospace manufacturing**;
    6. **Smart city / Smart mobility**;
- has a legal status and legal site within eligible IPA ADRION area of the PP country or in the same NUTS2 7 NUTS3 Region of the PP National Centre for Development of Innovation and Entrepreneurial Learning, Skopje Region, Republic of North Macedonia;
- does not have any outstanding tax and insurance liabilities, according to its declaration;
- it is not under liquidation or is not an enterprise under difficulty according to the European Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18;
- should not have been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures;
- should not have convictions for fraudulent behaviors, other financial irregularities, and unethical or illegal business practices.

STATE AID COMPLIANCE

Beneficiaries (MSMEs) of technical activities must fulfil the criteria defined by Commission Regulation 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to "de minimis aid".

The approved EU mechanism for State aid is this regulation that sets the 'de minimis ceiling' at 300.000,00 € per undertaking granted over any period of three fiscal years, to a single undertaking for a wide range of purposes.

A self-declaration is required per each undertaking applicant according to the above criterion and to format provided at the following link: State Aid Self-Declaration.

ELIGIBILITY OF SOFT-MEASURES PROJECTS

The call **is not intended** to support soft-measures projects which primarily involve:

- activities that have been started before the submission of the applications;
- activities financed by a different National or European Programme;
- activities not directly related with the purposes of GREENSMES project;
- activities, which do not comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;

Soft-measures project are eligible if:

- activities are based on original research/ideas and, going forward, any foreseen developments are not limited by third party rights, or are clearly stated if they are limited;
- implementation has overall duration not exceeding 6 months;
- budget required for implementation doesn't exceed €2,000.

Soft-measures activities submitted to receive services' support must fall into one of the following macro-categories (the applicant must tick the relevant box in the application form):

- **Building capacity for innovation management**: tailored workshops/training programmes to raise awareness and empower employees to drive green and sustainable initiatives;
- **Developing programmes/concepts for innovation challenges** (e.g., hackathons, case study competitions) in collaboration with educational institutions with the aim to gather external ideas and strengthen partnerships;
- **Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)** calculates the environmental impact of products or services throughout their entire lifecycle;
- **Development of energy efficiency projects, preparation of project applications, access to funding, and adoption of Sustainability Practices**;
- **Support for green innovation product/services**: idea evaluation, IPR strategy, product development services, business development services.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Applications will be made via email by MSMEs and will be checked for eligibility by the Evaluation Committee. The application process comprises of the submission of two (2) documents:

1. **Application Form** including the technical, financial proposal, and Declaration on Honor. GREENSMES_Application_ApplicantName
2. **State aid and de minimis self-declaration** GREENSMES_StateAid_ApplicantName

All documents must be signed and stamped by legal representative or authorized person (in this case a power of signature should be included) and sent in PDF format to **info@ncdiel.mk**.

Proposals (Application Form) must describe the objectives of the soft-measure project and relevant category, the overall concept and approach, the milestones and deliverables to be produced, the type expert support needed, the expected impact of the action (including quantitative indicators) and the indicative budget for the action.

ASSESSMENT OF SOFT-MEASURES PROJECTS

The members of the Evaluation Committee must have no conflict of interest with Applicants that may affect the potential performance of the innovation project.

Applications will be initially checked as per their completeness and the compatibility with the eligibility criteria. Applications, that do not comply with the eligibility criteria, will be rejected. In the case of rejection at this first evaluation stage, the Applicants will be informed by e-mail.

The applications, which will comply with the first stage of the evaluation, will be further evaluated for the second stage, which is based on three groups of qualitative criteria namely “Excellence”, “Impact” and “Capacity & Capability” in base of the following*:*

Scope	Criteria	Weight
A) Excellence	**A.1** Alignment with GREENSMES objectives; **A.2** Technical /Scientific quality (clear, reasonable, and relevant proposal rationale, milestones and deliverables); **A.3** Innovation potential (ground-breaking objectives, novel approaches); **A.4** Effectiveness of the proposed budget;	**40%**
B) Impact	**B.1** Enhancement of the innovation capacity of the company; **B.2** Replicability, Upscaling and Market Potential; **B.3** Clear, reasonable, and relevant impact indicators **B.4** Positive environmental impact expected	**30%**
C) Capacity & Capability	**C.1** Sufficient technical, financial and managerial capacity to implement the action; **C.2** Availability of relevant human resources and technical infrastructure assuring new knowledge integration in the company.	**30%**

Each award criterion will be scored on a scale from 0 to 10 and the corresponding weights will be applied to calculate the overall score of each Applicant.

The applications will be ranked according to the overall score – in descending order, from highest to lowest score – as a result of the particular scores obtained in each one of the evaluation criteria mentioned above.

The 5 grants will be awarded with respect to the afore-mentioned ranking and the available budget, taking to consideration that their cumulative proposed budget to be financed within GREENSMES project should not exceed the total amount of €10,000.

OBLIGATIONS OF BENEFICIARIES

The approved projects must be followed by a **cooperation agreement** stating mutual obligations, implementation duration, intermediate monitoring phase, expert assigned and intellectual property rights/commercial exploitation issues settlement (if any) between awarded MSMEs and the contracting organization.

Beneficiaries should also subscribe official commitment to follow instructions and methodology set by the assigned experts and to provide a final report about achieved results.

When signing the agreement, selected MSMEs should also provide Social Security clearance Certificate and Tax Clearance certificate.

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